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15 July 1954

BACKGROUND

GENEVA CONFERENCE

I. Communists expected offer Mendes-France
Indochina settlement by his 20 July
deadline.

A. Proposals almost certain to be
moderated by US and UK contributions.

II. Communist package expected include cease-
fire, partition both Vietnam and Laos, and
outline for political settlement.

A. Ambiguities should make proposals
easier for French to accept.

III. Communists expected make maximum claim
on Vietnam, a lesser ^{on} Laos, least on
Cambodia.

A. Partition Vietnam (between 14th-18th
parallel), general elections to
follow.

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- B. Control some part Laos, with remainder neutralized; agreement on steps toward coalition government.
- C. Neutralization Cambodia; some form recognition for "resistance movement."
- D. Such "neutralization" means ban on foreign military bases, sharp restriction defensive capabilities.

IV. Several territorial divisions Vietnam, Laos possible.

- A. Current Communist aim is division Vietnam at 14th parallel, large slice eastern Laos.
- B. French propose division Vietnam near 18th parallel (Dong Hoi line):
Apparently
willing accept Communist control small part Laos.

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C. Communists might accept Dong Hoi line, if also given control of portion southern Vietnam plus strip of Laos.

D. Might also settle for partition both Vietnam and Laos along Dong Hoi-Thakhek line (reported French defense line both states) which mean control northern half Indochina.

V. France, Associated States, have different attitudes toward proposals.

A. Unless Mendes-France recently shifted, will like as not accept proposals.

B. Vietnamese (opposed any deal with Viet Minh) fear French sellout: may try by-pass French, get best possible terms for themselves.

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- C. Laotians reportedly split on
(~~whether~~)
question recognize, negotiate with
Communist-sponsored "Pathet Lao."
- D. Cambodians, at last report, holding
firm against Viet Minh demands;
hoping for direct US support.